



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

for just what they are intended to be can read without receiving intellectual benefit and without being moved to a kind of glee by the clearness and brightness of the thing. This volume is one of them.

APPRECIATIONS OF POETRY. By LAFCADIO HEARN. Edited by JOHN ERSKINE, Ph.D. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1916.

From Lafcadio Hearn, one would be inclined to expect something strange and exotic in the way of criticism. It is not, however, this sort of criticism that we find in the book of appreciations which Professor Erskine has edited. On the contrary Hearn's comments are marked by a simplicity and purity of thought, a patience and lucidity of exposition that are seldom met with in the writings either of scholarly commentators or of literary men who criticize. The fault, if we care to find fault, lies rather in a certain narrowness of vision and a certain extreme minuteness and curiousness of consideration than in vagueness of view or in over-personal enthusiasms. For the mere rhetoric of appreciation Hearn hadn't, happily, much use: everything in poetry had to be clear for him—had to have a more or less demonstrable value.

The genesis of the book is interesting. As a teacher Hearn undertook the seemingly formidable task of explaining the beauties of English poetry to Japanese students. He had faithful listeners. He lectured so slowly that the members of his class were able to take down his discourses in many cases *verbatim*, and from their notebooks it has been possible to compile this volume.

The plea for romance has been admirably put by Lafcadio Hearn in his discussion—so necessary from the point of view of the lecturer—of the fact that English poetry deals very largely with the passion of love. "What is the object of art?" asked Hearn. "Is it not, or should it not be to make us imagine better conditions than that which at present exist in the world, and by so imagining to prepare the way for the coming of such conditions? I think that all great art does this. . . . [The period of love] is essentially a period of idealism, of imagining better things and conditions than are possible in this world. . . . The time of illusion, then, is the beautiful moment of passion, it represents the artistic zone in which the poet or romance writer ought to be free to do the very best that he can."

This passage perhaps marks nearly the outside limit of Hearn's range as a critic—as indicated in these lectures. In Rossetti, for example, the critic sees simply "the mingling of religious with amatory emotion in the highest form of which the language is capable." Perhaps that is enough to see in Rossetti—neither too much nor too little. However that may be, the phrase, "of which the language is

capable," is significant. Neither Ruskin nor any other critic is on the whole more successful than Hearn in making his readers understand and feel the subtle fusion in poetry of the poet's "message," his significance and meaning, with his imagery and his magic phrasing—that fusion which conveys the sense of warmth and intimacy and conviction.

It is true that apart from the curiosity which lends interest to the careful exposition by another of our own quite simple and matter-of-course knowledge and ideas—the interest of seeing that what we have taken for granted needs to be explained and defended—certain passages in the lectures are a little dull. But the volume as a whole is remarkable in its power to make one feel the beauties of poets so diverse as Swinburne and Matthew Arnold. The lecture on Kingsley, for example, though very simple, is a revelation.

Professor Erskine has been criticized for words, published in a previous volume, which place Hearn as a critic practically on a level with Coleridge. It may be said, perhaps, that so far as the present volume is concerned, one who cares less for the reputation of critics than for the value of poetry will not seriously object to this estimate of Hearn's critical powers. No sharp line can be drawn between the criticism that interprets and that which enhances. All criticism must do both. Hearn's interpretations are a trifle narrow; those of Coleridge tended to branch out into metaphysics or into the subjective intricacies of his own mind. Both illuminate. The criticisms of Hearn have, so to speak, a pedagogical and also a personal value that is quite distinct.

OUR NATION IN THE BUILDING. By HELEN NICOLAY. New York: The Century Company, 1916.

The opening sentence of Miss Nicolay's preface—"it occurs to the writer that we take our history too seriously"—perhaps does a slight injustice to the book of which it gives the first impressions. It is not through any light disregard of vital ideas or through any uncontrollable love of romancing that the author makes history attractive to her readers. Her book is valuable primarily because it enables one easily to grasp those ideas and sequences of events which one must have a vital grasp of if one is to know, in any real sense, anything at all about American history.

The trouble is, not that we take our history too seriously, or even that we take it too technically, but that a high-school student, say, needs to be a prodigy of industry and of appreciation in order to derive a vital conception of history from the average school text, and a teacher has to be a paragon of tact and learning in order to do what the text-book simply can't do—give life to the subject. Col-lateral reading is necessary, but its results are somewhat uncertain.